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(WASHINGTON, DC) -- This week the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation to address a projected shortfall in FY2009 highway and public transportation funding as well as to improve the safety of Federal-aid highway bridges. As a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Congressman Russ Carnahan (MO-03) co-sponsored the Highway Trust Fund Restoration Act and fought for the passage of the National Highway Bridge Reconstruction and Inspection Act.

The Trust Fund Act restores \$8.017 billion in highway-user taxes to the Highway Trust Fund that were transferred from the Trust Fund in 1998 in response to concerns that the Highway Account's balance was too large. Now the Highway Trust Fund faces major shortfalls in 2009 and beyond.

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) projects a \$14 billion shortfall for federal highway investment in FY2009. The funding was approved in 2005, but Highway Trust Fund revenues are falling behind what was expected.

Without the fix the state of Missouri is expected to receive \$252,009,237 less than FY2008 and lose nearly 9,000 jobs.

"Missouri's transportation system is already underfunded," said Congressman Carnahan. "Rebuilding our deteriorating infrastructure itself is one of the best ways of helping our sagging economy. We must act before we are forced to stall critical highway improvements, urgently needed economic development and thousands of jobs."

In addition to restoring expected highway funding the House also passed legislation to improve the safety of Federal-aid highway bridges, strengthen bridge inspection standards and processes and increase investment in the reconstruction of structurally deficient bridges on the National Highway System.

Thirty-one percent of all Missouri bridges are defined as deficient bridges. Out of Missouri's 24,071 total bridges, 4,433 are considered structurally deficient and 3,108 are considered functionally obsolete.

"There's no excuse for a repeat of the Minneapolis bridge collapse," said Congressman Carnahan. "The safety of commuters must be our absolute top transportation priority. This legislation assures commuters across the country that the bridges they cross have undergone the same scrutiny no matter what state they're in."

Currently 4,109 of Missouri's bridges are eligible for replacement including eight structurally

deficient interstate bridges located in Missouri's 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District. The Bridge Act authorizes \$1 billion in FY2009 to reconstruct structurally deficient bridges on the National Highway System. Funds are distributed by formula and are not transferable to other Federal-aid highway programs.

The legislation also requires the Transportation Secretary to develop a system to assign a risk-based priority to repair, rehabilitate, or replace each structurally deficient or functionally obsolete bridge, and ensures that states invest in upgrading bridges that are most critical to safety, as well as freight and passenger traffic. It also requires states to inspect structurally deficient bridges each year.

On Wednesday the Highway Trust Fund Restoration Act passed overwhelmingly 387-37. The National Highway Bridge Reconstruction and Inspection Act passed 367-55 earlier today.